Under Review:

(i) Recruitment Rules for Highly Skilled Grade in various industrial categories.

(ii) Recruitment Rules of Chief Draughtsman and Technical Officer to account for merger of these two categories.

(iii) Recruitment Rules for Assistant Engineer (Civil), Assistant Engineer (Electrical & Mechanical) and Assistant Engineer (Quantity Surveying & Contract).

(iv) Recruitment Rules for Administrative Cadre subject to merger of Administrative Officer-I and Administrative Officer-ll.

(v) Recruitment Rules for Group "C Industrial (39 categories) and Military Truck drivers.

Decline in Sikh personnel Joining the Armed Forces

1547. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that there has been a steep decline of personnel belonging to Sikh community in all the three wings of armed forces;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Every citizen of the country irrespective of their caste, religion and domicile is eligible for recruitment in the armed forces provided he meets the laid down physical, educational, medical and other criteria where specified.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Joint defence exercises

1548. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning any more two-nation joint defence

exercises with other countries, similar to the recently concluded exercise with the US Air Force;

(b) if so, the detals thereof;

(c) whether such peacetime exercises are precursors to wartime joint operations by India with any of the countries it holds joint defence exercises with; and

(d) if so, the details of any agreement in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The details of the joint exercise planned with armed forces of other countries are worked out through out the year. In near future joint exercises with countries like USA, UK, France, Singapore, Malayasia, Russia, Indonesia are likely to take place.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Acquisition of Submarine Vessels from France

1549. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has entered into a contract with France to acquire sophisticated submarine vessels;

(b) if so, the details of the contract and rigts of India to use French technologies for indigenous manufacture of its own submarines based on French technologies; and

(c) what is the world ranking of French submarine proposed to be acquired?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Contracts for the indigenous construction of six French scorpene class submarines at Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL), Mumbai, under Transfer of Technology from M/s ARMARIS, France were signed on 6th October 2005. The total cost of the project sanctioned by the Government is Rs. 18798 crore including Rs. 3553 crore as taxes. The project cost is inclusive of Rs. 2160 crore provided as budgetary estimate for Torpedo, Portable Deep